

# Trump 2.0

## Strategic Shifts and Implications for Pakistan-U.S. Relations

*VIEWS FROM CISS ISLAMABAD*



**Center for International Strategic Studies Islamabad**

**Ambassador Ali Sarwar Naqvi**  
**Executive Director, CISS**

Donald Trump's election as the next US President is remarkable in a number of ways he is the first President after 2004 to be re-elected again, the first time that there will be Republican control of the three branches of the US Government, the executive, the legislation and the judiciary, and the induction into office of a maverick individual. Trump is a convicted felon, with a past history of extra-marital affairs, and other misdemeanours, and a penchant for unconventional and unpredictable decisions.

In this background, he is likely to take positions that would be unforeseen and unanticipated. He has declared that he will not start any new war and will stop on-going wars. He said he will establish peace, but not bring about solutions. Thus, in the Russia-Ukraine war, he may bring peace but would not force Russia to give up Crimea or Eastern Ukraine. In the Gaza conflict, he may bring about a ceasefire, without any consideration of Palestinian rights or the creation of a Palestinian state. However, in the Middle East, he may resume confrontation with Iran and urge Israel to carry out reprisals in Iran. He will not go for a conflict with Iran, but would put pressure on Iran short of war.

He has declared a policy of America First, which would lead him to impose heavy tariffs and levies on Chinese goods and aggravate relations with China if he feels that China has threatened US interests. A major change could be US attitude towards NATO and Western Europe, as he does not give much weight to them, which could undermine the western alliance. He wants Europe to contribute more to their collective security and reduce their dependence upon the US.

As regards South Asia, Trump is likely to continue with the strategic partnership with India and see the region with Indian eyes. This would limit his focus on Pakistan. If at all, it would be a negative view of urging Pakistan to stop terrorism. He would not go into the dynamics of these problems, but would hold Pakistan responsible for its occurrence in the region. If he needs Pakistan in any manner, it would be a transactional cooperation. Regarding Afghanistan he would not want any change in US policy of non-recognition and no interaction with the Taliban regime.

Having said this, it must be stated that Trump is a maverick individual who takes surprising decisions that are often perplexing and enigmatic. This implies that his Presidency could be de-stabilizing and troubling for States which have a working relationship with the US.

**Ms Anum A Khan**  
**Associate Director Research**

Donald Trump's foreign policy is anticipated to be highly transactional. On arms control, Trump's past withdrawal from the INF Treaty and uncertainty around New START's renewal signal a shift toward a more assertive nuclear policy, emphasizing tailored responses and potential conditional Negative Security Assurances to non-nuclear weapon states based on evolving threats like cyber-attacks. Under Trump, extended nuclear deterrence would stay, but its reliability could be challenged during crisis.

For Pakistan, the current "do more" narrative from the U.S. is likely to persist, with heightened expectations for counter-terrorism actions. The composition of Trump's cabinet would also play a pivotal role, as pro-Israel or anti-Islam appointees could influence U.S.-Pakistan relations and affect religious freedoms for U.S. Muslims. Pakistan must communicate the disparity in diplomatic expectations placed on it versus India and emphasize the irrationality of unilateral restrictions.

Once Trump said about Pakistan-India relations, "If it was necessary I would do that. If we could get India and Pakistan getting along, I would be honored to do that. That would be a tremendous achievement... I think if they wanted me to, I would love to be the mediator or arbitrator." Pakistan should seek to brief the relevant factions in the new administration on the initiatives it has taken for confidence-building measures it continues to offer to India which are continually rejected.

Given the uncertain future of the Pak-U.S. Strategic Dialogue at least by the first half of 2025, Pakistan should engage proactively with the new administration, focusing on building bipartisan ties with policymakers,

Congress, and think tanks, especially in the early months of Trump's presidency. Pakistan-based think tanks should also engage with the American think tanks and officials taking up positions in the new Administration to work on a smooth US administration's transition and Pakistan-US relations.

Trump has pledged to push European allies, especially NATO members, to boost their defense spending, potentially raising the target from 2% to 3% of GDP. This approach shifts more defense responsibilities to European nations while potentially introducing tariffs on trade partners. However, Trump's stance allows room for allies to negotiate favorable trade deals, with countries like Ukraine and Israel encouraged to align their endgame strategies with U.S. preferences to ensure continued support. His criticism of the previous administration's Ukraine policies signals his intent to take a more direct, results-oriented approach.

In trade relations with China, Trump's strategy involves imposing tariffs on Chinese goods, reducing the U.S. corporate tax rate, and decreasing the national debt, alongside ramping up U.S. military presence in the Asia-Pacific. This economic and military positioning signals a tougher stance on China. Trump has also indicated willingness to withdraw U.S. forces from allied countries like Japan and South Korea if they do not "significantly" increase their financial contributions, suggesting a reshaping of U.S. commitments in Asia.

**Dr Rahat Iqbal**  
**Associate Director Research**

The relevance of Pakistan in US foreign policy has been reduced after the America withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021. Other than this, America interests has always contradicted with Pakistan's strategic interests may that be its relationship with China or its nuclear program.

Thus, outcome of Donald Trump 2.0 presidency may reshape the dynamics of the US engagement with India, while influencing the geo-political landscape of South Asia. Keeping in view the Donald Trump's mission of 'America First' and to counter China in Asia-Pacific, US would focus on enhancing its cooperation and assistance in military and technological domain with its allies against China.

The continued support and exceptional favours to India would create an uneasy situation in the South Asian region. This could adversely affect the South Asian strategic stability. This will leave Pakistan with no option other than focusing on enhancing its deterrence posture. Moreover, to have its strategic equilibrium and to enhance its standing, Pakistan needs to focus on strengthening its relations with other emerging and regional powers such as China, Russia, Afghanistan, Central Asian Republics in both the traditional and non-traditional aspects.

**Yasir Hussain**  
**Associate Director Research**

Finally, election frenzy in United States ended with former U.S. President Donald Trump's decisive victory against Vice President Kamala Harris. The return of President Trump to White House will have far reaching implications for several regions around the world and South Asia is not an exception.

In particular, Trump's presidency is expected to carry important geo-strategic and geo-economic implications for this region. Interestingly, President Trump has already termed India "Very Big Abuser" of trade. During his first Presidency, Trump threatened to impose sanctions on India for its oil purchases from Iran and S-400 missile defense from Russia.

As India proceeded with both without any fear of sanctions under Democrats leadership, it would be interesting to see how President Trump would react to Indian actions. Unlike Democrats, Republican leadership will take a strong stance against India's trade with Russia in local currencies. India's non-dollar trade with Russia to evade, US-imposed trade sanctions, will further push President Trump to act tough on India.

On Pakistan, the transactional nature of U.S.-Pakistan relations will continue to appear and re-appear under President Trump's second tenure. Pak-U.S. relations will be characterized by pragmatism and conditional cooperation, with a special focus on short-term goals rather than a deep strategic partnership. President Trump's approach will be more direct and results-oriented, largely centered around counterterrorism efforts.

**Amna Saqib**  
**Research Officer**

Trump's return to the White House could signal a turbulent shift in US-China relations, potentially heightening economic and strategic tensions. In contrast to Biden's diplomatic approach, Trump's focus may veer sharply towards economic and transactional policies, favouring tariffs and protectionist measures.

Trump has previously criticized China on trade imbalances and intellectual property practices, and during his campaign, he proposed extreme tariffs on Chinese goods. This could escalate into a trade war that further destabilizes the global economy and intensifies inflationary pressures in both nations.

Furthermore, Trump's ambivalence toward multilateral frameworks and climate agreements suggests a likely reduction in US-China cooperation on global issues such as climate change, tech regulations, and transnational crime. While Trump's pragmatic approach may allow for selective cooperation, it would largely be driven by US economic gain.



**Maryyum Masood**  
**Research Officer**

Under Trump, U.S. defense strategy is likely to shift further towards a transactional approach, where allies are expected to pay more directly for American protection. Trump has frequently criticized allies, including NATO members and Asian partners, for what he sees as an over-reliance on the U.S. military without adequate financial contribution. His recent remarks targeting US allies underscore this stance, suggesting that they should financially compensate the U.S. for its security and by no means become the reason for detraction from American economic interests.

In this framework, Trump's policy is likely to pressure allies not only to increase defense spending, but also to align their industries more favorably with American economic goals. For Taiwan, this could mean that defense assistance could be leveraged as a bargaining chip, particularly in sectors like semiconductors, where the U.S. seeks to regain a competitive edge.

This shift could redefine the U.S. relationship with some of its allies from one based primarily on shared security interests to a transactional arrangement with economic strings attached.

Globally, Trump's approach could create tensions with allies wary of the increased financial and political demands, potentially pushing some countries to seek greater strategic autonomy, balancing U.S. reliance with ties to other powers.

**Murad Ali**  
**Research Officer**

President Trump's victory in securing a second term as President of the United States has captured the attention of scholars across the globe. A key question being asked is how US foreign policy will be shaped under the Trump administration. In Pakistan the question is about how Trump 2.0 will be different from Trump 1.0 with regards to United States foreign policy trajectory toward Pakistan. During the previous Trump administration, the United States halted defence aid to Pakistan and imposed sanctions, signalling a shift in the bilateral relationship.

Pakistan's strategic program has long been a point of contention in US foreign policy. Given this backdrop, questions arise about how President Trump's second term might approach these complex issues.

Since 2018, US-Pakistan relations have reached a low point, leading to speculation about the future trajectory of US foreign policy towards Pakistan under the Trump administration's second term. Pakistan will urge the Trump administration to adopt a balanced policy towards both Pakistan and India. The preferential approach of the US toward India has always impacted Pakistan, as it has created a diplomatic and strategic imbalance in South Asia.

**Abdul Moiz Khan**  
**Research Officer**

The re-election of Donald Trump as President with a Republican majority in both House and Senate can play an important role in shaping both domestic and international policies of the U.S. The focus of President Trump would be on domestic and economic issues, especially regarding immigration laws.

On the international front, Trump prefers American foreign policy value of isolationism instead of interventionism of neo-conservatives. To counter the economic rise of China, President Trump has focused on improving American economy by waging trade war and preferring protectionist policies. Trump stance on NATO, Ukraine and other international issues is to not spend billions of dollars for others' security. Trump has also announced that he has plans to end both Ukraine crisis and Israel's aggression and genocide in Gaza and Lebanon. Trump's inward looking policies would be the driving force behind the foreign policy decisions taken during his second tenure.

Trump disengaged from Afghanistan and would further disengage from other Middle Eastern countries and focus more on countering the increasing influence of China in the Asia-Pacific through bolstering its capabilities and strengthening its strategic alliances and partnerships in the region. Pakistan has to make the United States realize that the latter has to de-hyphenate its relations with Islamabad from both New Delhi and Beijing's lens. The relationship between the United States and Pakistan has historical significance and despite its ups and downs, if solely looked at through a bilateral lens, there is a certain potential for collaboration on both non-traditional and traditional security challenges.

Donald Trump's unprecedented comeback as the 47th president of the US marks a unique moment in the country's electoral history. He is the first-ever president-elect who is convicted of felony crimes, still reeling under multiple civil and legal cases. His ascendance to the highest US office, despite controversial political legacy, highlights the divided and dysfunctional US political landscape. This has allowed the Americans to vent frustration at the outgoing Biden administration through the electoral process. The sitting Vice-President Kamala Harris failed to navigate through political choppy waters of American political challenges at home as well as abroad. It is so because, she did not distancing herself from the unpopular policies of the outgoing President Joe Biden by giving fresh and alternative courses of action to Americans. This resulted in a body blow to the electoral campaign of the Democrats.

Trump's policies, however, are likely to be driven more by personal politics than by informed, institutional approaches, with a focus on militarization of politics over liberal diplomacy. His vow to revitalize the 'Make America Great Again (MAGA)' agenda, may likely push for isolationist policies abroad, and reduced international cooperation. It will have direct bearing on the future trajectory of the US foreign policy agenda. His foreign policy would likely remain external to South Asia, with more focus on China in reigniting a trade war. There will be an intensification of geopolitical rivalry in South China sea and further militarization of the Asia Pacific by US to counter China. Relations with Pakistan, particularly after the withdrawal of the US troops from Afghanistan, would likely tread on the heels of Joe Biden's low-intensity engagement policy, with limited development aid and no significant military support.

**Muhammad Ali Baig**  
**Research Officer**

In 2025, Donald Trump's return to the White House will redefine American foreign policy. During his first term, he emphasized on bringing troops home – notably ending the U.S. military presence in Afghanistan. He also highlighted this move in his victory speech by declaring it part of the “greatest political movement of all time.” His re-election suggests that voters favor a focus on domestic issues rather than overseas conflicts. In contrast, Kamala Harris's loss reflects that she couldn't distance herself from the unpopular Biden administration.

In the future, key U.S. allies like Japan and South Korea may reconsider their Asian defence strategies. The U.S. Trump's victory could heighten economic tensions between the U.S. and China along with the U.S. regional militarization. This could place Pakistan in a challenging position to balance its security concerns with economic pressures while navigating an India-favored U.S. policy.

Therefore, CISS may help the Pakistani decisionmakers shape policies that safeguard national interests while avoiding entanglement in broader conflicts. It can advise on enhancing nuclear and conventional deterrence measures to ensure national security through a diplomatic stance. This may help any future conflict de-escalation by dialogues in line with Pakistan's security stability objectives.

Trump administration's earlier approach with India was based on favoritism – as a counterbalance to China – supporting India's role as a regional power and largely refraining from direct pressure on India's nuclear program.

Consequently, CISS may provide its services promoting a balanced regional security framework through diplomatic channels, strengthening Pakistan's credible minimum nuclear deterrent, and encouraging dialogue with international partners on the importance of a level playing field in South Asia's nuclear landscape.

For this reason, CISS may focus on deepening ties with allies and non-aligned nations' think tanks to offset regional imbalances. It can support the development of advanced defensive capabilities and advocate for regional arms control measures, thereby contributing to a stable deterrence posture.

In the current geopolitical landscape, the growing trust deficit among major nuclear powers has deepened the security dilemma, undermining global arms control efforts. A second term for Donald Trump could open new avenues for U.S.-Russia arms control negotiations. Trump has publicly expressed his intention to pressure Ukraine into peace talks with Russia, potentially reducing U.S. military and political support for Kyiv. Trump's strategy might bring an end to the ongoing conflict and create a window for renewed dialogue on arms control with Russia.

Though it might be too optimistic to predict that both nations might develop a comprehensive treaty like New START, however, Trump's leadership could facilitate limited but meaningful agreements. They might develop mutual understandings or mutually agreed restraints in the form of confidence-building measures. Only if U.S.-Russia relations experience a *détente* post-conflict. Russia, facing economic challenges, could also show a willingness to engage as the expiration of New START looms in 2026.

Furthermore, Trump has shown interest in expanding arms control discussions to include emerging technologies like hypersonic weapons. This focus could reshape strategic stability frameworks. Achieving such an ambitious agenda would require overcoming significant diplomatic hurdles. Overall, Trump's assertive, open and direct foreign policy posture would be substantial in achieving it.

Donald Trump's return to the U.S. presidency is poised to have a sweeping global impact, likely energizing nationalist and populist movements worldwide. In India, where the BJP has maintained power by channeling nationalist sentiments, Trump's victory serves as ideological support and a potential strategy guide.

Both Trump and the BJP have leveraged divisive narratives to galvanize their bases, often targeting minorities and framing immigration and religious identity as central to national security and cultural preservation. With Trump back in power, India's government may feel emboldened to adopt even more polarizing policies, seeing the U.S. as a political partner that legitimizes such approaches.

Beyond India, Trump's win could invigorate populist leaders across the globe. These leaders have often positioned themselves as defenders of traditional values against perceived liberal or globalist threats. Trump's America-first agenda, focusing on sovereignty and reduced foreign intervention, resonates with leaders prioritizing national interests over global cooperation. This could lead to further disengagement from multilateral organizations, potentially weakening international frameworks that address climate change, migration, and human rights.

Globally, Trump's win could reshape geopolitical alliances, favoring countries and leaders aligned with his brand of nationalism while distancing the U.S. from progressive coalitions. This shift may encourage similar nationalist factions worldwide to push harder for policies that isolate and prioritize their nations, driving a global political climate that is more insular, divided, and defined by ideological confrontation.



In Europe, Trump's comeback presents a dilemma for centrists and liberals, while offering a significant boost to populist right-wing parties. Leaders like Hungary's Viktor Orbán and Marine Le Pen in France have already admired Trump's style of governance, particularly his tough stance on migration and his critiques of multilateralism.

Trump's re-election may encourage these leaders to double down on their own anti-immigrant and Eurosceptic platforms, seeing Trump as a powerful ally against EU norms and progressive global initiatives. With a Trump-led America possibly retreating from NATO commitments and pressuring allies to increase defense spending, European leaders may be forced to take a more militarized and self-reliant approach to security, potentially destabilizing the EU's internal cohesion.

**Nawal Nawaz**  
**Research Assistant**

The results of presidential elections in the United States resonated far beyond American borders, shaping decisions and policies in capitals worldwide. This second Trump Presidency would present a complex and important chapter in U.S.-Pakistan relations. This new chapter in relations between two countries can be marked by renewed focus on strategic alignment, with emphasis on security concerns rather than economic or democratic development.

Islamabad's economic relationship with Washington remains edifice of bilateral ties, with U.S. being the largest export market of Pakistan amounting around \$5 billion annually as of 2023. Similarly, the U.S. is also a significant investor in Pakistan especially in sectors like energy, agriculture and technology. These economic partnerships are vital for Pakistan's financial stability. USAID programs and the U.S.- Pakistan Green Alliance have been instrumental in helping Pakistan sustain economic crisis and foster climate resilience. Donald Trump's focus on reducing foreign assistance and tightening trade policies could potentially disrupt these efforts.

Moreover, Donald Trump's antagonism towards China could test Pakistan's diplomatic resilience, placing Islamabad in a precarious situation of balancing act. However, unlike the Biden's administration, Donald trump would prefer to adopt foreign policy of direct engagement with Pakistan, potentially opening doors for dialogue on pressing issues like Afghanistan's stability and counterterrorism. Success will hinge on Pakistan's diplomatic agility and its ability to strike balance in its relations with both Beijing and Washington.

Fostering educational and business ties with the Pakistani-American diaspora can also play a significant role in establishing mutual understanding. Therefore, despite political challenges, Trump presidency could open up ample opportunities for Pakistan in targeted areas like counterterrorism, education and business ventures.



**Zamzam Channa**  
**Research Assistant**

The U.S. foreign policy towards Pakistan has certain implications on Islamabad's economic stability, security dynamics, and Pakistan's international diplomatic standing. In the recent history, Pakistan-U.S. relations have been influenced by regional counterterrorism efforts, and Afghanistan.

During his first presidential term, Trump adopted a relatively cooperative stance towards Pakistan. Pakistan played an important role in facilitating Doha Peace Talks between the U.S. and Afghan Taliban. However, despite Pakistan's relentless efforts in bringing peace in Afghanistan, Trump administration, in 2017, blocked Coalition Support Fund which had significantly helped Pakistan in its counterterrorism efforts.

The current global and regional geopolitical landscape offers an opportunity for a renewed collaboration between the upcoming administration in the Oval House and Pakistan. Extending bilateral economic cooperation, particularly in sectors such as energy, IT, and agriculture, could prove mutually beneficial for the two countries. Notably, the U.S. administrations have historically supported regional energy projects like the TAPI gas pipeline, while it has also opposed Pakistan-Iran gas pipeline.

Moving forward, the Trump administration should do well to balance its approach towards Iran while considering Pakistan's critical energy needs. The new administration can potentially re-evaluate its stance on the Pakistan-Iran pipeline.

**Fujin Naz Haidery**  
**Research Assistant**

With the comeback of Trump in the White House, the debate around implication of his foreign policy goals in determining the international political order has been the trending subject among analysts and scholars. While the home-front issues for Trump administration would unequivocally concern inflation and immigration, his foreign policy orientations have stirred varied opinions. It is so because unpredictability has been a trademark of Trump's politics.

In the context of global policy, non-interventionism and protectionism will potentially be the main highlights of Trump's "America First" agenda. Concerning this, China lies at the core 'region of interest' and the domain of competitive influence. A more guarded approach merits consideration for the administration in the 'region of concern' i.e., Europe, particularly with regards to the current war between Ukraine and Russia, and re-evaluation of engagement of the U.S. with the NATO. The hardline stance of Trump, as adopted through his previous administration, has been against Iran that lies in the 'region of heightened risk' i.e., Middle East.

With the history of pro-Israel bias, as manifested in Abraham Accords, and the punitive sanctions against Iran, the main challenge lies in either to aggressively deal with Iran or to intervene diplomatically in the current crisis via "Peace through strength" policy- as adopted by the previous Trump administration. This, however, obstructs the agenda of "rule based international order" where military support to Israel, as well as Ukraine for that matter, is juxtaposed to the promotion of human rights and democracy.

With regards to South Asia, which is now the “region of moderate relevance,” the Trump Administration may possibly seek an India-centric South Asian policy due to disengagement with Afghanistan and more engagement with containing China’s influence.

In this backdrop, while Pakistan may face diplomatic stagnancy regarding Kashmir issue, the overall diplomatic pressure - as witnessed during the previous Trump administration - may be alleviated, thus, retaining stable diplomatic ties between the two countries.



## **Malik Muhammad Kashif**

### **Research Assistant**

Since Pakistan has a deep history of bilateral relationships with the US, the Trump-led administration has the potential to reshape the relationship between two countries. Either the War on Terror (WoT), or the US forces' withdrawal from Afghanistan, Pakistan has played a constructive role that strengthened its relationship with the U.S. Previously, U.S. relationship with Pakistan during Trump presidency was marked with pressure, shifting priorities and mixed diplomatic signals. Initially, President Trump, suspended \$ 300 million security aid in 2018, and accused Pakistan of “nothing but lies and deceit” in a tweet but, he later hosted a friendly meeting with former Prime Minister Imran Khan at the White House in 2019.

New Trump administration has various options for strengthening strategic collaboration and cooperation with Pakistan. these include combating terrorism, climate change, foreign direct investment (FDI) programs, and maintaining the regional security environment. During his previous tenure, Trump adopted the “pay-for-performance” policy with Pakistan and maintained strategic cooperation to meet its interest in Afghanistan. Consequently, a policy of conditional engagements and strategic pragmatism will remain a persistent challenge for the Pakistan-U.S. relationship.

Moreover, a strategic partnership with India and a strategic competition with China will be detrimental factors for the Pakistan-U.S. relationship. If Trump 2.0 follows the same path and gives special treatment to India, it will impede the bilateral relationship with Pakistan. Moreover, the use of economic coercion in the region has the potential to drastically impact the economic conditions of Pakistan.

So, Islamabad needs to maintain a balanced foreign policy approach between the U.S. and China. In short, the future of Pakistan-US relations under Trump 2.0 would depend on both states willingness to align on common strategic goals, while respecting the strategic imperatives of both sides.





**Anam Murad Khan**  
**Research Assistant**

Trump's aggressive stance toward nuclear arms control could continue in his second term, potentially destabilizing nuclear deterrence between US and Russia. His prior withdrawal from the INF Treaty, exit from the Iran Nuclear Deal (JCPOA), and possible failure to extend the New START treaty with Russia suggest a preference for expanding U.S. nuclear capabilities. This could fuel a new arms race as Russia and China would likely respond by enhancing their own nuclear and missile systems. Moreover, Trump's withdrawal from Iran Nuclear Deal had already strained nonproliferation efforts, and a second term could exacerbate the situation, especially in the Middle East.

Trump's policies on AI and cybersecurity could undermine nuclear deterrence. Trump could spur innovation in military AI applications, but without proper oversight, these technologies might introduce new risks of miscalculation or accidental launches. Moreover, his approach to cybersecurity, focusing on offensive measures, could increase vulnerabilities in critical nuclear infrastructure.

Trump's focus on countering China could benefit India, allowing it more autonomy in balancing its defence ties with Russia and the U.S. However, his reduced global engagement might create friction, particularly with European allies, as India's ongoing relationship with Russia could provoke diplomatic tensions.

Trump's re-election would likely shift U.S. foreign policy toward a more transactional and isolationist approach, reducing U.S. involvement in global conflicts, especially in Europe.

This shift would ease pressure on countries like India to align strictly with U.S. priorities, especially regarding Russia. In the Asia-Pacific, U.S.-India relations could strengthen, as both countries share a common interest in countering China.

However, Trump's skepticism toward multilateralism may weaken global institutions and limit diplomatic cooperation on critical geopolitical challenges. His policies could lead to a more fragmented global order, with a focus on bilateral agreements rather than multilateral cooperation.

**Shahwana Binte Sohail**  
**Research Assistant**

The recent victory of Donald Trump signals a return to the “America First” foreign policy framework that may reshape U.S. involvement in global affairs and present both challenges and opportunities for Pakistan. Given Trump’s past policies, there could be a retreat from multilateral commitments, increasing the likelihood of U.S. reliance on bilateral agreements.

This shift may prompt Pakistan to recalibrate its foreign policy to secure favorable bilateral terms, especially in the areas of security, trade, and development. A primary area of concern for Center for International Strategic Studies (CISS) Islamabad is the potential intensification of U.S. China competition.

Trump’s stance on China is likely to be tough, reflecting his earlier policies, which focused on economic restrictions and strategic containment. For Pakistan, this may create a complex situation due to its close ties with China, especially because of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

CISS may need to engage in strategic analysis and advocacy to help Pakistan navigate this delicate balance between fostering ties with the U.S., while continuing its partnership with China. On the economic front, Trump’s protectionist policies may affect trade with Pakistan, limiting exports. However, his business-friendly stance could create opportunities for Pakistan to attract American investment in technology, infrastructure, and energy.

**Muhammad Haseeb Riaz**  
**Research Assistant**

Trump's ascendance to power at White House is an important moment for the global strategic landscape amid the transitioning international order. However, Pakistan will not be a major foreign policy priority for the prospective Trump administration.

There is a broader consensus in Washington, if we look at Biden and last Trump administration, to counter China in the Asia-Pacific region. Trade wars between China and U.S. were the hallmark of previous Trump administration. The Trump administration would seek to intensify the competition with China that could up the ante against countries who are close with China especially on infrastructural and developmental projects such as Pakistan.

Retrospective analysis of first Trump administration suggests that US cooperation with Pakistan in the realms of Climate Change and clean energy cooperation would be relegated as more pressing geo-strategic and geopolitical issues would gain greater importance. The struggling economy of Pakistan may find Trump administration far less sympathetic as far as economic aid and loan packages are concerned.

Trump administration has regrettably been less sensitive to Pakistan's core interest i.e. Kashmir and been more demanding on Afghanistan. On the flip side of it, keeping in view the Trump's personality-centered diplomatic overtures rather than institutionalized mechanisms, Trump has only engaged with former Prime Minister Imran Khan constructively.

Hence, the ending of Imran Khan's incarceration is not entirely out of question. State department and Pentagon's engagement with Pakistan's diplomatic corps and security establishment would more depend upon the whims of Trump rather than the broader policy framework.

So, Pakistan is going to have a more conditional and transactional relationship with US hinging fundamentally upon security concerns rather than economy or development. The future of US-Pakistan relations under the shadow of Trump seems bleak and not very encouraging in near future at least.

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## ***Views from CISS Islamabad***

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**The Center for International Strategic Studies Islamabad conducts original policy research, analyses, and outreach to highlight the evolving regional and global strategic issues to promote peace and stability.**

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